John 3:16 …

The Foundational Verse of Christendom

Introduction:

Beginning as a child I was taught this very verse at home, Sunday school, and Children's Church. The day I professed Christ as my savior my pastor emphasized this verse, relating to me how important CHRIST'S LOVE was for me and everyone else. This simple verse in John 3:16 … remains the most quoted verse in the Bible. Almost every child that has attended Sunday school or Catechism growing up learned this verse. I would venture to say that more sermons have been preached with this simple verse as their text than any other in history. It is amazing how these simple 25 words set the stage for the Gospel of Christ for generations and yes even the past two centuries.

How old were you when you first heard the words of John 3:16? Do you remember who shared them with you?

Looking at a few translations of

John 3:16 … King James Version (KJV)

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16 … Amplified Bible (AMP)

16 For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten ([a]unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall

not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.[1]

John 3:16 …. Christian Standard Bible (CBS)

"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

I (Dr. Don Allen) as with many of you had the privilege of hearing Dr. Billy Graham on television and radio over the decades. I was always amazed at how he could take the profound and make it simple: "Jesus Loves YOU!"

Rev. Billy Graham shared prior to his death in February 2018 the following comments:

"By the time you read this, I will be in heaven, and as I write this I'm looking forward with great anticipation to the day when I will be in God's presence forever.

I'm convinced that heaven is far more glorious than anything we can possibly imagine right now, and I look forward not only to its wonder and peace, but also to the joy of being reunited with those who have gone there before me, especially my dear wife, Ruth. The Bible says, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

But I won't be in heaven because I've preached to large crowds or because I've tried to live a good life. I'll be in heaven for one reason: Many years ago I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to make our forgiveness possible and rose again from the dead to give us eternal life. Do you know you will go to heaven when you die? You can, by committing your life to Jesus Christ today.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)."[2] — Billy Graham

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[1] Amplified Bible (AMP): Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation

[2]Shelby Star: Dated Feb 21, 2018 © Copyright 2006-2019 Gate House Media, LLC. All rights reserved Gatehouse News

This Study-guide is designed to serve as Personal or group study of this amazing verse John 3:16.

An anonymous writer made a great observation about the verse when he wrote: ***"JOHN 3:16 reveals the breath, length, depth, and height of God's love."***[3]

Martin Luther, who is one of the great reformation preachers of the 1500's and founder of the Lutheran Church, used the following outline as he preached:

- **"God"** …. The greatest Lover
- **"so loved"** … The greatest Degree
- **"the world" …** The greatest Company
- **"that He gave**" … The greatest Act
- **"His only begotten Son"** … The greatest Gift
- **"that whosoever"** … The greatest Invitation
- **"believeth" …** The greatest Simplicity
- **"in Him**" … The greatest Person
- **"should not perish**" … The greatest Promise
- **"but"** … The greatest Difference
- **"have**" … The greatest Certainty
- **"everlasting life**" … The greatest Possession

I (Dr. Don Allen) remember hearing a story as a preacher spoke many years ago (I don't know if it is true). However, if it is true, the relevance on human history is a

[3] Anonymous found on the following website @ http://www.mentoring-disciples.org/Quotes.html

direct disgrace to Christians and especially those that claim to believe John 3:16.

The story goes like this:

In the late 1800's an American missionary was visiting a local church in China and preached an inspiring message about John 3:16. At the conclusion, a young man walked up to discuss the message with the missionary and pastor. However, they informed him they had a dinner appointment and had to leave. As they walked out of the building the young man was heard to say if sharing Christ is not important to them, then HE (assuming the young man was referring Christ) will never be important to me. Rumors have it the young man's name was Mao Zedong, the communist dictator that would go on to kill millions.

Folks, here again I don't know if the story is true. However, the message the story shares is heart breaking: We want to preach John 3:16 … But do we really want to share it?

How do you feel as a Christian when you read this story? Have you initially ever walked away from someone asking you about Christ?

The founder of the Methodist church, considered by most to be one of the great preachers of the faith and an evangelist, John Wesley wrote:

"16. Yea, and this was the very design of God's love in sending him into the world. Whosoever believeth on him - With that faith which worketh by love, and hold fast the beginning of his confidence steadfast to the end. God so loved the world - That is, all men under heaven; even those that despise his love, and will for that cause finally perish. Otherwise not to believe would be no sin to them. For what should they believe? Ought they to believe that Christ was given for them? Then he was given for them. He gave his only Son - Truly and seriously. And the Son of God gave himself, Gal. iv, 4, truly and seriously."[4]

Another great preacher and writer A.W. Tozer, in his book: And He Dwelt Among Us: Teachings from the Gospel of John wrote about John 3:16 …. "Jesus Christ came not to

[4] Wesley, John, Wesley's Notes on the Bible …

condemn you but to save you, knowing your name, knowing all about you, knowing your weight right now, knowing your age, knowing what you do, knowing where you live, knowing what you ate for supper and what you will eat for breakfast, where you will sleep tonight, how much your clothing cost, who your parents were. He knows you individually as though there were not another person in the entire world. He died for you as certainly as if you had been the only lost one. He knows the worst about you and is the One who loves you the most.

If you are out of the fold and away from God, put your name in the words of John 3:16 and say, "Lord, it is I. I'm the cause and reason why Thou didst on earth come to die." That kind of positive, personal faith and a personal Redeemer is what saves you. If you will just rush in there, you do not have to know all the theology and all the right words. You can say, "I am the one He came to die for." Write it down in your heart and say, "Jesus, this is me—Thee and me," as though there were no others. Have that kind of personalized belief in a personal Lord and Savior."[5]

Have you ever felt out the fold (running away from God)? When you focus on this simple verse, how did it feel to realize that Christ loved you so much?

John Walvoord, Former President & Professor at Dallas Theologian Seminary, wrote about John 3:16:

"God's motivation toward people is love. God's love is not limited to a few or to one group of people but His gift is for the whole world. God's love was expressed in the giving of His most priceless gift—His unique Son (cf. Rom. 8:3, 32). The Greek word translated one and only, referring to the Son, is monogenē, which means "only begotten," or "only born-one." It is also used in John 1:14, 18; 3:18; and 1 John 4:9. On man's side, the gift is simply to be received, not earned (John 1:12-13). A person is saved by believing, by trusting in Christ. Perish (apolētai) means not annihilation but rather a final destiny of "ruin" in hell apart from God who is life, truth, and joy. Eternal life is a new quality of life, which a believer has

[5] A.W. Tozer, in his book And He Dwelt Among Us: Teachings from the Gospel of John

now as a present possession and will possess forever (cf. 10:28; 17:3).”[6]

Matthew Henry’s complete commentary gives the following description of this passage, and summarizes the message of this verse very well:

“Here is much, here is all in a little, the word of reconciliation in miniature. First, Here is God’s love in giving his Son for the world (v. 16), where we have three things: — 1. The great gospel mystery revealed: God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son. The love of God the Father is the original of our regeneration by the Spirit and our reconciliation by the lifting up of the Son. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God. This magnifies his love in giving him for us, in giving him to us; now know we that he loves us, when he has given his only-begotten Son for us, which expresses not only his dignity in himself, but his dearness to his Father; he was always his delight. (2.) In order to the redemption and salvation of man, it pleased God to give his only-begotten Son. He not only sent him into the world with full and ample power to negotiate a peace between heaven and earth, but he gave him, that is, he gave him up to suffer and die for us, as the great propitiation or expiatory sacrifice. It comes in here as a reason why he must be lifted up; for so it was determined and designed by the Father, who gave him for this purpose, and prepared him a body in order to it. His enemies could not have taken him if his Father had not given him. Though he was not yet crucified, yet in the determinate counsel of God he was given up, Acts. 2:23. Nay, further, God has given him, that is, he has made an offer of him, to all, and given him to all true believers, to all the intents and purposes of the new covenant. He has given him to be our prophet, a witness to the people, the high priest of our profession, to be our peace, to be head of the church and head over all things to the church, to be to us all we need. (3.) Herein God has commended his love to the world: God so loved the world, so really, so richly. Now his creatures shall see that he loves them, and wishes them well. He so loved the world of fallen man as he did not love that of fallen angels; see Rom. 5:8 ; 1 Jn. 4:10 . Behold, and wonder, that the great

[6] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-). Jn 3:16, https://john316explained.wordpress.com/

God should love such a worthless world! That the holy God should love such a wicked world with a love of good will, when he could not look upon it with any complacency. This was a time of love indeed, Eze. 16:6, Eze. 16:8. The Jews vainly conceited that the Messiah should be sent only in love to their nation, and to advance them upon the ruins of their neighbours; but Christ tells them that he came in love to the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews, 1 Jn. 2:2. Though many of the world of mankind perish, yet God's giving his only-begotten Son was an instance of his love to the whole world, because through him there is a general offer of life and salvation made to all. It is love to the revolted rebellious province to issue out a proclamation of pardon and indemnity to all that will come in, plead it upon their knees, and return to their allegiance. So far God loved the apostate lapsed world that he sent his Son with this fair proposal, that whosoever believes in him, one or other, shall not perish. Salvation has been of the Jews, but now Christ is known as salvation to the ends of the earth, a common salvation. 2. Here is the great gospel duty, and that is to believe in Jesus Christ (Whom God has thus given, given for us, given to us), to accept the gift, and answer the intention of the giver. We must yield an unfeigned assent and consent to the record God hath given in his word concerning his Son. God having given him to us to be our prophet, priest, and king, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. 3. Here is the great gospel benefit: That whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish. This he had said before, and here repeats it. It is the unspeakable happiness of all true believers, for which they are eternally indebted to Christ, (1.) That they are saved from the miseries of hell, delivered from going down to the pit; they shall not perish. God has taken away their sin, they shall not die; a pardon is purchased, and so the attainder is reversed. (2.) They are entitled to the joys of heaven: they shall have everlasting life. The convicted traitor is not only pardoned, but preferred, and made a favourite, and treated as one whom the King of kings delights to honour. Out of prison he comes to reign, Eccl. 4:14. If believers, then children; and, if children, then heirs. Secondly, Here is God's design in sending his Son into the world: it was that the world through him might be saved. He came into the world with salvation in his eye, with salvation in his hand. Therefore the aforementioned offer of live and salvation is sincere, and shall be made good to all that by faith accept it"

The gentleman that is often referred to as the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, shared the following introduction to one of his most powerful messages, “Immeasurable Love”:

In my opinion as editor of this study-guide, Spurgeon is able to preach as well as put the message in writing for future generations. Please fix your heart on the scripture and the words of this message.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

“WAS very greatly surprised the other day, in looking over the list of texts from which I have preached, to find that I have no record of ever having spoken from this verse. This is all the more singular, because I can truly say that it might be put in the forefront of all my volumes of discourses as the sole topic of my life's ministry. It has been my one and only business to set forth the love of God to men in Christ Jesus. I heard lately of an aged minister of whom it was said, "Whatever his text, he never failed to set forth God as love, and Christ as the atonement for sin." I wish that much the same may be said of me. My heart's desire has been to sound forth as with a trumpet the good news that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. [7]"

It is shared in The Biblical Illustrator, Electronic Database that Spurgeon wrote:

“Believe Only:

John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish…

It is said that some years ago a vessel sailing on the northern coast of the South American continent, was observed to make signals of distress. When hailed by another vessel, they reported themselves as "Dying for water!" "Dip it up then," was the response, "you are in the mouth of the Amazon river." There was fresh water all around them, they had nothing to do but to dip it up, and yet they were dying of

[7] Immeasurable Love A Sermon (No. 1850) Intended for reading on Lord's-Day, July 26th, 1885,C. H. SPURGEON, At the famous Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, England On the evening of June 7th, 1885 …

thirst, because they thought themselves to be surrounded by the salt sea. How often are men ignorant of their mercies? How sad that they should perish for lack of knowledge! Jesus is near the seeker even when he is tossed upon oceans of doubt. The sinner has but to stoop down and drink and live."[8]

Questions to ponder as we conclude:

Have you come to understand and personally accept the message of John 3:16?

What do you feel that message is for you as an individual?

Have you asked Christ into your personal life?

The Author of this study-guide:

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https://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/believe_only.htm